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AUTHOR	Rejholec, Tod
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ABSTRACT

Data were collected for this action research to determine the value of an extrinsic reward as a self-management tool for motivating eighth grade language arts students. The sample was drawn from students at a school in the northwest suburbs of Chicago, Illinois. The school was one of two middle schools in the city. This convenience sample specifically included one eighth grade language arts class of 32 students. A baseline time of three weeks was used to tally the number of times the students brought the Accelerated Reader book to class: a book often forgotten. Following this time, there was a three week time period where rewards were given for bringing the book. A tally mark was given without the students' knowledge for each time a student brought the Accelerated Reader book to class during this time as well. During the reward period, the students were given a tangible gift of "Smarties" candies for bringing the Accelerated Reader book to class. When the data were collected, means were calculated for each week of data collection: a total of six weeks. Additionally, means and percentages were calculated for the first three-week baseline time and the second three-week data collection (the reward period). Data collected helped determine the difference between the two time periods. The data indicated using an extrinsic reward increased students' motivation to bring the Accelerated Reader book to class. The overall increase between the baseline period and the reward period was greater than 15%. Similarly, the mean for the baseline period which tallied the number of students bringing the book to class was 12.0. The mean for the reward period was 16.3. Contains 2 charts of data and 15 references. A tally sheet is appended. (Author/RS)

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Running Head: Extrinsic Rewards

An Action Research on the Effects of Extrinsic Rewards on Motivation of Eighth Grade Language Arts Students

Tod Rejholec

Concordia University

July, 2002

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Abstract

Data were collected for this action research to determine the value of an extrinsic reward as a self-management tool for motivating eighth grade language arts students.

The sample was drawn from students at a school in the northwest suburbs of Chicago, Illinois. The school was one of two middle schools in the city. This convenient sample specifically included one eighth grade language arts class or 32 students.

A baseline time of three weeks was used to tally the number of times the students brought the Accelerated Reader book to class: a book often forgotten. Following this time, there was a three week time period where rewards were given for bringing the book. A tally mark was given without the students' knowledge for each time a student brought the Accelerated Reader book to class during this time as well. During the reward period, the students were given a tangible gift of "Smarties" candies for bringing the Accelerated Reader book to class.

When the data were collected, means were calculated for each week of data collection: a total of six weeks. Additionally, means and percentages were calculated for the first three-week baseline time and the second three-week data collection (the reward period). Data collected helped determine the difference between the two time periods.

The data indicated using an extrinsic reward had an increase on students' motivation to bring the Accelerated Reader book to class. The overall increase between the baseline period and the reward period was greater than 15%. Similarly, the mean for the baseline period which tallied the number of students bringing the book to class was 12.0. The mean for the reward period was 16.3.

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Chapter I
Introduction

Nature of the Problem

Because students did not always bring a required Accelerated Reader book to class, improvement was needed. The ability to select the best methods to motivate students was an additional concern for the researcher and other educators alike. Teachers often use grades or prizes to change a student's behavior, increase interest, or achieve a desired goal, such as bringing all materials to class on time. Responsibility for a student's own behavior (self-management) is often targeted by teachers with extrinsic rewards (Kohn, 1993).

Chance (1992, p200) states, "To teach without using extrinsic rewards is analogous to asking our students to learn to draw with their eyes closed." He noted that praise from the teacher was a common yet effective extrinsic reward. Chance (1993) noted that other types of extrinsic rewards can be non-verbal and be as simple as a smile or a wink. Another common extrinsic motivator is the reward—usually a tangible object.

According to Kohn (1993) gold stars, money, even grades are extrinsic rewards. Kohn documented that the value of extrinsic motivation may come at the expense of intrinsic motivation. Kohn noted that rewards may change behavior briefly, but the lasting result had a negative impact on the desired objective.

Deci (1972) noted the dangers of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation. Deci & Ryan (1985) examined intrinsic rewards in human behavior. Deci & Ryan noted that people often participate in a task because of feelings of the challenge, or because of competence and control, or because of self-determination—freedom from control (p30).

Statement of the Problem

The extent to which extrinsic rewards affected the motivation towards self-management of eighth grade students was the topic of this action research study.

Purpose of the Study

1. To determine whether the introduction of extrinsic rewards had a positive affect on student's self-motivation.
2. To determine whether extrinsic rewards should be valued as a tool for affecting motivation in eighth grade language arts students.

Definition of Terms

Self-management: taking responsibility and initiative for one's behavior in completing a task.

Extrinsic rewards: any rewards given to a student because of achievement.

Token Reward: any nominal gift for desired behavior.

Extrinsic motivation: the will to accomplish a task because of some expected reward (usually tangible).

Intrinsic motivation: the will to accomplish a task because of an inward yearning and without desire of praise, tangible reward, or fear of punishment.

Tangible object: that which can be held.

Inspire: cause one to act favorably.

Achievement: competence in school related areas.

Limitations of the Study

1. Students may have felt the extrinsic reward had little monitory (or "real") value and may not have inspired the students.

2. The population was not a true random sample but a convenient sample which was taken for practical reasons.

3. A small sampling percentage of the total population of eighth grade students in the area was used, and in terms of total population, it can not be generalized.

4. The observation may have been subject to some small researcher error as the tally marks may not have been scored accurately.

5. The time of this study was near the end of the school year therefore other things besides classroom responsibilities may have been in the minds of the students.

6. Students may have worked harder at the desired task after realizing that they were being observed for this self-management behavior.

Organization of the Study

1. Select a topic
2. Consult with professor
3. Form a researchable question
4. Perform internet search
5. Read and summarize journal articles
6. Complete Chapter I: Introduction
7. Complete Chapter II: Review of Related Literature and Research
8. Complete Chapter III: Research Design of the Study
9. Implement extrinsic reward program
10. Tally information during reward program
11. Stop extrinsic rewards program
12. Tally information during the time immediately after termination of the reward
13. Analyze data
14. Complete Chapter IV: Interpretation of Data
15. Complete Chapter V: Summary
16. Prepare final manuscript

Chapter II

Review of Related Literature and Research

Extrinsic Motivation and Intrinsic Motivation

The use of extrinsic motivation and its affect on intrinsic motivation is often considered but rarely agreed on by researchers. Noels' (2001) research of French Canadian students learning English using an integrative orientation at a bilingual institution found motivation through intrinsic means was high, and to a lesser extent, so was motivation through extrinsic means. Noels found that the desire to communicate effectively with other language speakers drove the French speakers to be fluent English speakers.

Chance (1993) noted that extrinsic rewards need to be used (but with wisdom) or they will have negative effects. Chance noted that if intrinsic rewards were only used, it would not be enough for effective learning. In order to be most effective, rewards must be given as a result of success. Extrinsic rewards are used inappropriately when success is not taken into consideration. Additionally, when the ability to succeed is not practical because of a high standard, extrinsic rewards are again viewed negatively.

Patel (1996) noted that extrinsic rewards for medical students had a disappointing effect. Patel questioned the efficiency of motivating students with prizes and honors—realizing that few receive prizes while many others do not in a success contingent reward system. In short, extrinsic rewards in that system indicated negative effects.

McGinnis (1999) studied two students using token rewards for the completion of math assignments. The students were given three choices of work to perform during designated time periods. Of the three varied choices, only math pages were rewarded with the token reward.

Rewards were slowly taken away until permanently withdrawn. McGinnis found that interest in completing math pages dipped slightly for one child while not quite as much for the other after removal of the reward.

Kohn (1993) examined numerous studies that used extrinsic rewards. Kohn found that if a reward—like praise, money, or even grades—was contingent on an action or behavior, then the overall result had the opposite, negative affect. Kohn noted that extrinsic motivation through rewards only resulted in a temporary obedience. In short, Kohn explained when a reward is offered for an action or behavior, then the action or behavior is viewed negatively.

Deci & Ryan (1985) examined many studies noting that extrinsic rewards are detrimental to motivation. The researchers cited research that observed nursery school children through adults and "rewards ranging from money to marshmallows, activities ranging from solving puzzles to beating a drum, settings ranging from psychology laboratories to newspaper offices, and cultures ranging from the United States to Japan" (p.51)—all having the same negative result.

Sweet & Guthrie (1996) interviewed school children at many age levels regarding the children's motivation to read. Sweet & Guthrie found both extrinsic and intrinsic motivations for children wanting to read. Sweet & Guthrie concluded from their research that intrinsic motivation was required for lifelong, voluntary reading. Extrinsic rewards—which were derived from the parent or teacher—have little long term effects. The researchers noted extrinsic rewards do have a positive effect on skill-building activities, however.

Wiersma (1992) authored a meta-analysis of 20 studies to note the effects of extrinsic rewards in intrinsic motivation. Wiersma questioned whether intrinsic and extrinsic rewards had an additive effect or whether extrinsic rewards hurt the value of intrinsic rewards. In the meta-analysis verbal extrinsic rewards were not considered, however, financial extrinsic rewards were included in the study. Also included were contingent reward studies and non-contingent reward

studies. Wiersma first summarized the findings of the incorporated studies noting the following: contingently given extrinsic rewards can reduce motivation when task behavior is measured during a free-time period, but reduced motivation does not occur when task performance is measured while the extrinsic reward is in effect.

Wiersma (1992) then concluded that performance may increase, decrease, or stay the same when extrinsic rewards are introduced into a situation. The researcher noted that performance increases were likely caused because the effect of the extrinsic motivation as being stronger than that of the intrinsic motivation. Performance decreased if the extrinsic reward was deemed weaker than intrinsic motivation. And if performance stayed the same, then extrinsic motivation was deemed equal to intrinsic motivation.

Literature Review Table

Author	**Title**	**Findings**
Noels	Intrinsic, Extrinsic, and Integrative Orientations of French Candian Learners of English	Intrinsic motivation was the key factor in motivating French speaking Canadians to learn English
Chance	The Rewards of Learning	Extrinsic rewards had a positive effect when used correctly and a neg. effect when used indiscriminately
Patel	Everybody Has Won, and all Must Have Prizes	Extrinsic rewards noted as having more negative than positive effect on medical students
McGinnis	The Effect of Token Rewards on Intrinsic Motivation for Doing Math	Interest in completion of math pages continued strongly in at least one (of two) students after rewards were removed
Kohn	*Punished by Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plan$, A's, Praise and Other Bribes*	After examining hundreds of studies, the evidence indicated that reward contingent motivation had a negative effect.
Deci & Ryan	*Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*	Extrinsic rewards are detrimental to motivation for all ages and purposes
Sweet & Guthrie	How Children's Motivations Relate to Literacy Development and Instruction	Extrinsic rewards are derived from the parent or teacher, and they have little long-term effect. They do have a positive effect on skill building activities
Wiersma	The Effects of Extrinsic Rewards in Intrinsic Motivation: a Meta-Analysis	Depending on the strength of the extrinsic reward, the value—as it relates to intrinsic motivation—can be positive, negative, or neutral

Chapter III

Research Design of the Study

Population and Sampling

The sample population used in this study was drawn from one northern Illinois public middle school that had nine eighth grade language arts classes. It was one of two middle schools in the city. The total eighth grade class numbered approximately 290 students. The entire school population comprised approximately 870 students. The population of the northern Illinois city was approximately 28,000 people. One of eight middle school language arts classes from the school was selected for the research or approximately 32 students.

Procedures

The students in the observed class were asked to bring a required book to class—a book that was often not brought to class—namely the student's Accelerated Reader book. Tally marks were made on the sheet to determine the number of students bringing the book during the initial (baseline) period of three weeks. After this period, students were rewarded for bringing the required book to class. This procedure took place for an additional three weeks. A token extrinsic reward (Smarties Candies) was given to those who brought the required book during the second three week period. Praise, another extrinsic reward (Chance 1992), was not used in this study. Marks were tallied on a designed form (see appendix A) recording each student who brought the book to class over each of the two three-week periods.

Chapter IV

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Data were collected and tallied. Measures of the mean were calculated for each week for a total of six weeks. Additionally, the mean was calculated for the baseline period (weeks one through three) and then for the extrinsic reward period (weeks four through six). The mean was used to determine students' change in self-management behavior in relation to the introduction of the extrinsic reward. Percentages were calculated daily, weekly, and for the baseline and reward periods. The data were displayed in a visual form (grid one and grid two).

The data showed that during the baseline period (weeks 1 through 3), 37.12% of the students brought the required book to class. During the reward period (weeks 4 through 6), 53.96% of the students brought the required book to class, an improvement of 16.84%. Also, during the baseline period, the mean of students bringing the book to class was 12. During the reward period the mean increased to 16.3.

More specifically, the first week 38.46% of students brought the book to class. The second week was similar with 38.88% of students bringing the required book to class. The third week a lower percentage (34.04%) of students brought the Accelerated Reader book to class. This concluded the baseline period. In contrast, 53.58% of students brought the required Accelerated Reader book to class during the first week of the reward period. 53.28% brought the book the second week of the reward period. In the final week, the most students brought the book to class, 55.02%

The mean was similar to that of the percentages, showing large increases in the reward periods. The means for weeks 1 and 2 of the baseline period were 11.8 and 11.6, respectively. The mean for week 3 was 12.8. Means increased during the reward period. Weeks 4 and 5 (or the first and second week of the reward period) were similar with a mean of 16.4. The final week was 16.2.

Week one	Students	absent	students with book	percent		Week two	Students	absent	students with book	percent
Monday	32	2	8	26.6		Monday	32	3	12	41.3
Tuesday	32	2	9	30		Tuesday	32	4	11	39.2
Wednesday	32	1	16	51.6		Wednesday	32	2	11	36.6
Thursday	32	0	12	37.5		Thursday	32	1	15	48.3
Friday	32	2	14	46.6		Friday	32	1	9	29
Week three	Students	absent	students with book	percent		Week four	Students	absent	students with book	percent
Monday	32	0	11	34.3		Monday	32	1	10	32.2
Tuesday	32	1	12	38.7		Tuesday	32	1	20	64.5
Wednesday	32	2	12	40		Wednesday	32	2	17	56.6
Thursday	32	1	10	32.2		Thursday	32	1	18	58
Friday	32	0	8	25		Friday	32	2	17	56.6
Week five	Students	absent	students with book	percent		Week six	Students	absent	students with book	percent
Monday	32	1	15	48.3		Monday	32	4	17	60
Tuesday	32	0	17	53.1		Tuesday	32	3	17	58.6
Wednesday	32	1	17	54.8		Wednesday	32	2	16	53.3
Thursday	32	4	16	57.1		Thursday	32	2	14	46.6
Friday	32	3	17	53.1		Friday	32	2	17	56.6

week	percent	mean	percent of weeks 1-3	mean of weeks 1-3
1	38.46%	11.8		
2	38.88%	11.6		
3	34.04%	12.8	37.12%	12
4	53.58%	16.4	percent of weeks 4-6	mean of weeks 4-6
5	53.28%	16.4		
6	55.02%	16.2	53.96%	16.3

Note: Grid One (above). Grid Two (left).

Weeks one, two, and three indicate the baseline time, while weeks four, five and six indicate the reward period. Although it may appear that in some areas of the grids that larger

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percentages were given to less numbers of students bringing books to class, this was not the case. Absences were taken into account each day and account for any variations as noted by Grid One.

The data indicated using an extrinsic reward had an increase on students' motivation to bring the Accelerated Reader book to class. The data showed large increases in percent and mean from the baseline period to the reward period. Additionally, increases in percent and mean could be noted per individual week with the reward period having the greatest increase.

Chapter V

Summary and Recommendations

"If an instructor wants students to begin a new behavior or to behave in an easily specified way, extrinsic inducements always work more quickly and powerfully than intrinsic ones" (Lowman, 1990 p.137). This succinct point is a strong summary of this researchers own findings. The students responded favorably to the implementation of the extrinsic reward to change behavior. Brophy (1998) adds, "Rewards are better used with routine tasks than with novel ones, better with specific intentional learning tasks than with incidental learning or discovery tasks, and better with tasks where steady performance or quantity of output is of more concern than creativity, artistry, or craftsmanship. It is better to offer rewards as incentives for meeting performance standards (or performance *improvement* standards)...." (p.11). Deci (1995) echoes these sentiments, but adds words of caution. Deci notes in *Why We Do What We Do* the following: "People's behavior can, at least to some extent, be controlled in the sense that people will do what they have to in order to get extrinsic rewards, avoid punishments or win competitions" (P51). Deci, however, gives two warnings if one chooses to use extrinsic rewards. First, the behavior will last as long as the reward--which may be detrimental-- if the goal is to continue the desired behavior. Second, once a person is accustomed to looking forward to the extrinsic rewards then the person will take the shortest route to get them. This undermines the behavior teachers often try to foster.

The data supported these statements. The simple rewards that I gave helped encourage the students to bring the required book to class. This was evident. Because the task was simple, took little creativity, and perhaps because students had little *intrinsic* motivation to bring the book to class, I believe it was an ideal situation in which to use an extrinsic reward. I believe extrinsic

rewards should be used—but sparingly and carefully in the classroom. Extrinsic rewards should be only used for rewards in which there is little to no intrinsic motivation. If, for example, a teacher were to suggest the use of extrinsic rewards to encourage students to get better grades, then I would be apprehensive. In this instance, the drive to earn better grades should be intrinsic and any attempt to make it an extrinsic reward system would have little positive results and could—according to most researchers including Kohn, Brophy, Deci, and others—cause the student to take short-cuts to earn those rewards or even detest the work to get the grades altogether—eliminating intrinsic and lasting benefits.

On another level I could talk of the reward itself as it ultimately was the motivator. Walker (1984) states, "If the task is more demanding than the reinforcer is desirable, the learner is not sufficiently motivated to perform" (p78). The candy seemed to be sufficient to bring an increase in motivation. I wonder, however, if a greater extrinsic motivator would have brought about a greater participation in the desired behavior, and if so, for how long? Kohn (1992) notes in his book *No Contest: The Case against Competition* "that when students see themselves as performing a task in order to receive a reward, their interest in that task is likely to decline..." (p218).

In short, even though the extrinsic reward had immediate and positive effects initially, the chance for a decline is apparent. Research should then be expanded to include yet another period in which students were weaned off the extrinsic rewards and then determine the frequency in which the student would then bring the required book to class.

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Appendix A

Student	WEEK_____	X=ABSENT	0=NO BOOK	1=BOOK	DATE	WK.TOTAL
	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
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15						
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32						
TOTAL						

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Signature: Tod Rejholec	Printed Name/Position/Title: Tod Rejholec, Language Arts Teacher
Organization/Address: N/A	Telephone: 815-759-3701 FAX: N/A
	E-Mail Address: Weston_coach1@hotmail.com Date: 01-17-03